

Message Text

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14

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 AID-20 EB-11 AGR-20

OMB-01 IGA-02 DRC-01 /160 W
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O P 270835Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3164

INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

COMUSSAG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 10372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, EAID, CB

SUBJECT: RICE AIRLIFT FOR CAMBODIA

REF: STATE 192029

1. MUCH APPRECIATE PROMPT ACTION ON 20,000 TONS OF KOREAN
RICE FOR CAMBODIA.

2. WE TOO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT RAMIFICATION OF AIRLIFT FROM
BATTAMBANG. BUT IT IS OUR CONCLUSION, ALBIET REACHED WITH
THE GREATEST RELUCTANCE, THAT COMMENCEMENT OF AIRLIFT AT THE
EARLIEST MOMENT HAS NOW BECOME OF URGENT NECESSITY. AS WE SEE
IT, EVEN IF THE THAI, KOREAN AND THE JAPANESE RICE IS DELIVERED
IN THE BEST TIME, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY DURING THE NEXT FEW
WEEKS AHEAD TO ASSURE THAT GOVERNMENT STOCK LEVELS OF RICE IN
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PHNOM PENH WILL NOT DROP BELOW AN EXPLOSIVELY DANGEROUS LEVEL.

NOTE THAT PART OF THE GKR STOCK IS IN PADDY WHICH TAKES TIME TO MILL. ALSO THE VKR IS ALREADY DISTRIBUTING SECOND QUALITY, 50 PERCENT BROKENS, RED RICE AND GLUTINOUS RICE WHICH THE PUBLIC CONSIDER BARELY EDIBLE. ALTHOUGH THE PUBLIC HAS NOT YET REACTED, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE HOW LONG CALM WILL PREVAIL.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL COSTS OF RUNNING OUT OF RICE NOW ARE INCOMMENSURATE WITH THE BUDGETARY COSTS OF MOVING 3,000 TONS BY AIR AS A SAFETY PLAY. CONSIDERING PRIOR EXPERIENCE WHEN RIOTS AND LOOTING OF RICE BEGAN WHEN STOCK LEVELS DROPPED TO 6 DAYS, WE NEED TO BEND EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP STOCK LEVELS ABOVE ONE-WEEK SUPPLY.

4. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT MAKES MILITARY OR ECONOMIC SENSE TO TRY TO OPEN ROUTE 5 AT THIS POINT. TO DO SO, AND TO HOLD IT OPEN THE MONTH REQUIRED TO MOVE THE QUANTITIES OF GOODS WE ARE TALKING ABOUT WOULD REQUIRE EMPLOYMENT OF AN INTERVENTION BRIGADE PLUS. THE PRIORITY MILITARY OBJECTIVE MUST NOW BE TO FLESH OUT THE DEFENSES OF PHNOM PENH AND THE REGIMNS, AND ABOVE ALL TO REST, REFIT AND REMAN THE INTERVENTION UNITS. USE OF GOOD BRIGADE ON ROUTE 5 NOW WOULD MEAN THAT ONE BRIGADE LESS WOULD BE IN CONDITION FOR THE DRY SEASON, AND THAT COULD MAKE THAT IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE WHETHER THE REPUBLIC SURVIVES OR NOT. WE DO NOT SEE THAT THERE IS REALLY ANY OTHER VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO AIRLIFT.

5. WHETHER OR NOT THE FIRST 12,500 TONS OF THAI RICE COME THROUGH ON TIME, WE SIMPLY NEED THE 3,000 TONS FROM BATTAMBANG AS A SAFETY FACTOR THROUGHOUT THE FALL. ALTERNATIVE OF MOVING IT BY LAND TO THAILAND AND EITHER SWAPPING OR TRANSPORTING ACROSS COUNTRY WOULD BE EXCRUCIATINGLY TIME CONSUMING TO NEGOTIATE, NO DOUBT COSTLY, SLOW, AND ABOVE ALL CHANCY. TIME LOST NOW EXPLORING, MUST LESS NEGOTIATING, ALTERNATIVE WAYS SUCH AS SWAP IS PRECIOUS TIME LOST.

6. THIS SITUATION IS DIFFERENT FROM THE RICE CRISIS OF A YEAR AGO. THEN WE WERE PUSHING THE GKR TO PUT TROOPS ON ROUTE 5 AND OPEN IT, AND THE REPUBLIC'S MILITARY AND POLITICAL MARGIN FOR MANEUVER WAS SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER. NOW IT NEITHER MAKES SENSE NOR CAN WE AFFORD TO TAKE RISKS.

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7. WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT A MASSIVE AIRLIFT, BUT AN AIRLIFT TO BRING A FEW THOUSAND TONS OF RICE FROM BATTAMBANG. NOTE THAT WITH APPROXIMATELY 20 C-130 FLIGHTS COMING IN DAILY WITH AMMO AND OTHER MAP CARGO, ADDITIONAL SORTIES FOR THE RICE MAY MAKE LITTLE PUBLIC IMPACT. THE AIRLIFT WILL TAKE ABOUT 25 TO 30 DAYS TO BRING SIX TO TEN DAYS RICE SUPPLY TO THIS CITY. THAT IS NOT VERY MUCH BUT IT COULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

8. REQUEST YOUR AUTHORITY TO PROCEED IMMEDIATELY AND AT DOD RATE.
ENDERS

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Message Attributes

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